

Message Text

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ACTION L-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-06 IO-10 ISO-00 FEA-01 AID-05 CEQ-01

CIAE-00 COA-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 EPA-01 INR-07

NSF-01 NSC-05 NSAE-00 PM-03 OES-03 SS-15 SP-02

DOT-00 FMC-01 CG-00 DLOS-03 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06

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R 140920Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2000

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 0636

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PLOS, EWWT, IMCO, SN, NY, ID

SUBJECT: FORTHCOMING TRIPARTITE FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING ON SHIPPING
REGULATIONS IN STRAITS OF MALACCA/SINGAPORE

REF/ (A) STATE 029561; (B) SINGAPORE 0593; (C) STATE 030361

1. DCM CALLED ON MFA DEPUTY SECRETARY TAN BOON SENG FEBRUARY 14
TO REITERATE U.S. POSITION AS OUTLINED PARA 2 REF A. TAN
TOOK NOTES AND OFFERED NO SPECIFIC COMMENT ON U.S. POSITION. HE
CONFIRMED THAT THE SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE IMS COUNTRIES WOULD MEET
IN SINGAPORE ON FEBRUARY 17 AND 18 AND THAT THE MINISTERS WOULD
MEET ON THE 19TH. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THE DISCUSSIONS WOULD CEN-
TER ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: TRAFFIC SEPARATION IN THE STRAITS,
POSSIBLE RESTRICTIONS ON DRAFT AND SIZE OF SHIPS AND COOPERATION
ON COMBATING POLLUTION.

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2. TRAFFIC SEPARATION. TAN SAID THAT THE DATA FROM THE LATEST

HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY HAD NOT YET BEEN PROCESSED AND PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE READY UNTIL MARCH OR APRIL. HOWEVER, THE MINISTERS WILL PROBABLY ENDORSE TRAFFIC SEPARATION IN PRINCIPLE, LEAVING THE DETAILS TO BE WORKED OUT LATER. THIS WOULD MERELY REPRESENT A REITERATION OF PAST POSITIONS TAKEN BY THE THREE GOVERNMENTS.

3. WITH RESPECT TO RESTRICTIONS ON SIZE AND DRAFT, THE GOS WAS FIRMLY OPPOSED TO IMPOSING ANY RESTRICTIONS ON THE TONNAGE OF SHIPS PASSING THROUGH THE STRAITS. HOWEVER, THE GOS WOULD ACCEPT A LIMITATION OF 21 METERS ON THE DRAFT OF MERCHANT SHIPS. HE NOTED THAT AT LOW TIDE THE STRAITS' MINIMUM DEPTH WAS 23 METERS AND THAT THIS WOULD PROVIDE TWO METERS CLEARANCE. TAN SAID THAT THE INDONESIANS HAVE PROPOSED A LIMITATION OF 19 METERS TO PROVIDE A GREATER MARGIN OF CLEARANCE. HE SEEMED UNCERTAIN WHETHER ANY COMPROMISE WOULD BE REACHED.

4. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION MINISTER DJALAL, THE INDONESIAN EMBASSY'S LOS EXPERT WHO WILL ATTEND THE SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING, CONFIRMED 19 METER POSITION EXPLAINING THAT GREATER MARGIN OF CLEARANCE REQUIRED SINCE DRAFT OF SHIPS WOULD SOMETIMES VARY AT STERN OR BOW IF SPEED REDUCED OR COURSE ALTERED. HE ALSO SAID GOI WOULD ALSO PRESS FOR PROHIBITION ON TANKERS OVER 200,000 TONS ON FOLLOWING GROUNDS: (A) TANKERS OVER THIS LIMIT COULD CAUSE SEVERE POLLUTION IF THEY RAN AGROUND; (B) SUCH TANKERS WERE NOT MANEUVERABLE AND THEREFORE MORE PRONE TO ACCIDENT; (C) RECORD TO DATE REVEALED THAT TANKERS OVER 200,000 TONS HAD HAD MANY MORE ACCIDENTS THAN TANKERS UNDER THIS LIMIT.

5. ANTI-POLLUTION MEASURES. TAN NOTED THAT ONE OF THE ASEAN COMMITTEES HAD TRIED TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM, BUT FOUND IN THE COURSE OF THEIR DELIBERATIONS THAT MOST OF THE ASEAN COUNTRIES (EXCEPT SINGAPORE) DID NOT HAVE A SUFFICIENT SCIENTIFIC AND GOVERNMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO DEAL ADEQUATELY WITH POLLUTION PROBLEMS. THEREFORE, THIS ASEAN EFFORT HAD LAPSED SINCE IT WAS RIDICULOUS TO TALK OF REGIONAL COOPERATION TO COMBAT POLLUTION IN THE ABSENCE OF NECESSARY NATIONAL EXPERTISE. HE SAID THAT IN THE RECENT SHOWA MARU OIL SPILL SINGAPORE HAD OFFERED ASSISTANCE TO BOTH INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA TO HELP CLEAN UP SOME OF THE OIL WHICH HAD DRIFTED INTO THEIR WATERS. CONSEQUENTLY, HE THOUGHT IT QUITE LIKELY THAT AT THE CONFERENCE THE THREE COUNTRIES WOULD AGREE TO

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ASSIST EACH OTHER IN COMBATING ANY SPECIFIC POLLUTION PROBLEMS CAUSED BY SHIPPING IN THE STRAITS. WITH RESPECT TO POSSIBLE RESTRICTIONS ON SHIPS PASSING THROUGH THE STRAITS--E.G., PROHIBITIONS AGAINST BLOWING THEIR TANKS, DISCHARGING WASTE MATERIALS, ETC., TAN SAID THAT THE GOS WOULD PROBABLY TAKE THE POSITION THAT APPROPRIATE STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS ON SUCH MATTERS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED BY THE RELEVANT COMMITTEE ON POLLUTION AT THE LOS CONFERENCE IN GENEVA.

6. IMCO APPROVAL. TAN SAID THE GOS HAS ALWAYS TAKEN THE POSITION THAT ANY TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEME OR RESTRICTIONS ON THE DRAFT OF VESSELS TRANSITING THE STRAITS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO IMCO FOR ITS CONSIDERATION, COMMENT AND ULTIMATE ADOPTION. HOWEVER, TAN ALSO COMMENTED THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE SOME DOUBT WHETHER IMCO COULD ACTUALLY APPROVE REGULATIONS SINCE IT WAS BASICALLY A CONSULTATIVE AND ADVISORY ORGANIZATION. NEVERTHELESS, TAN SAID GOS WOULD INSIST THAT ANY PROPOSED REGULATIONS BE REVIEWED BY IMCO ALTHOUGH HE IMPLIED THAT A CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE MIGHT ONLY REFER TO CONSULTATION WITH USER COUNTRIES AND APPROPRIATE INTERNATIONAL BODIES.

7. SHORTLY AFTER DCM'S CALL ON TAN, JAPANESE AMBASSADOR UOMOTO REVIEWED PROBLEM WITH DCM AND ME. HE SAID HE HAD RECENTLY DISCUSSED SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS WITH PERMSEC BOGAARS WHO HAD ASSURED HIM THAT SINGAPORE WOULD NOT AGREE TO ANY REGULATIONS ON SHIPPING IN THE STRAITS UNLESS THEY WERE APPROVED BY IMCO.
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